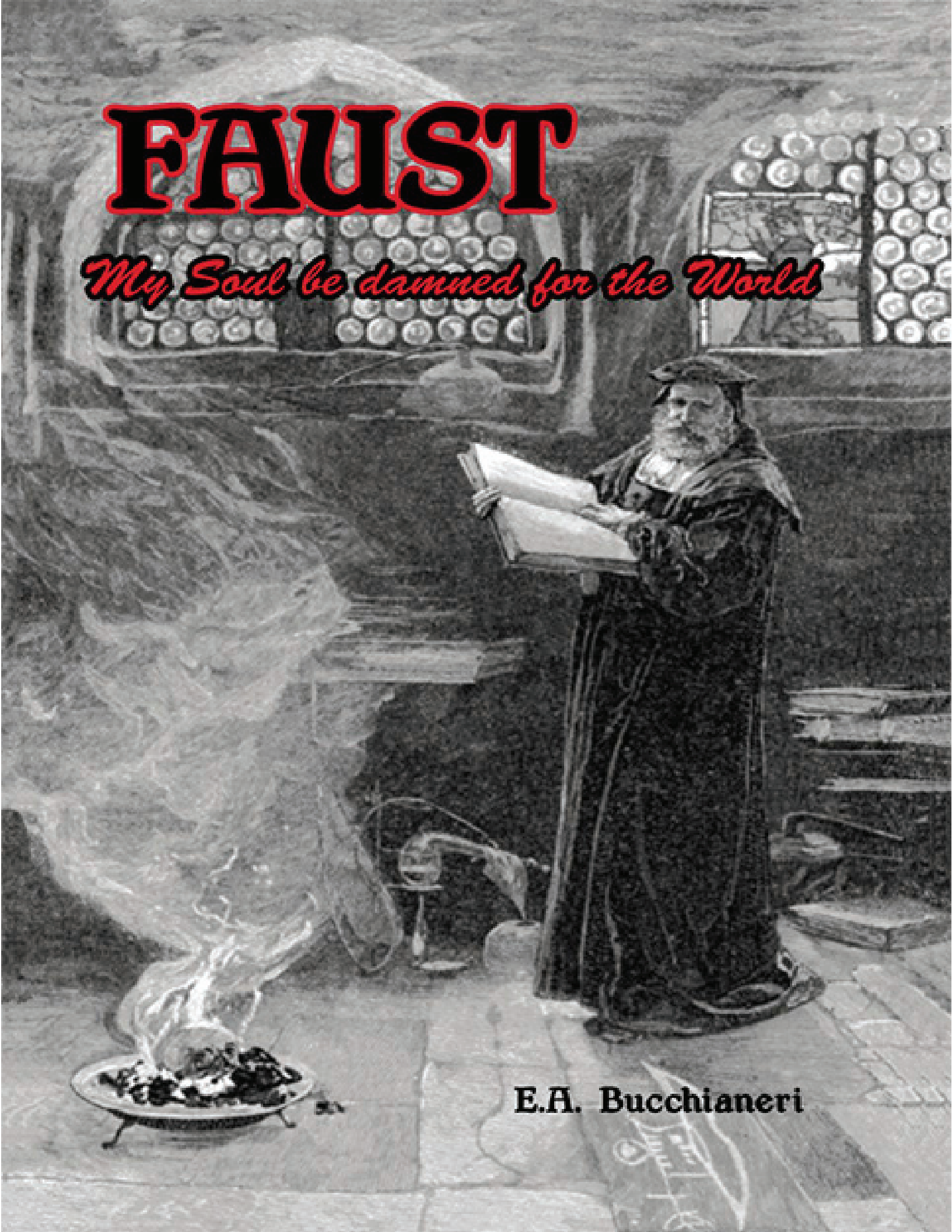


FAUST

My Soul be damned for the World



E.A. Bucchianeri

Faust:
My Soul be Damned for the World

Volume I

By
E.A. Bucchianeri

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Chapter 1

The Historical Faustus: the Man behind the Myth

Faust, the notorious reprobate who willingly forfeited his immortal soul to the devil in exchange for the fleeting illusory pleasures of the world as depicted and recounted in famous works of art, literature, drama and music, did not originate as the imaginary brainchild of a literary genius. A *historical* figure named ‘Faust’ did exist, but with the passage of time, this individual faded into semi-obscurity, gradually becoming immortalised as a mythical character — the original name, *Faustus*, became confused in a barrage of theological, philosophical, political, and artistic literature that continually reshaped his legend through the centuries up to the present day.*

Retracing the life of Faustus is not a simple task; the facts are shrouded and distorted in the mists of time and speculation, presenting a formidable challenge for any dedicated researcher who endeavours to compile an accurate biography. The proof of his existence survives in university and city records, letters, private journals, chronicles and other similar documents. Furthermore, the meagre historical documentation referring to him is limited and often tainted, it contains partial and oftentimes inaccurate information, or is permeated with the subjective opinions of the chroniclers. For example, the important details pertaining to the time and place of Faustus’ birth and death remain subject to scholarly conjecture. Nevertheless, through these various sources we discover the nature of the career he embarked upon, and in certain documented instances, where he travelled. We also discover through these diverse accounts contemporaries whom he influenced or who regarded him with contempt and derision; an important point to observe, for these individuals affected the opinions of those affiliated with their particular social and intellectual circles. As time progressed, these scholars enhanced, magnified and embellished the original accounts — a process that ultimately encouraged the proliferation of the Faustian legend. Our search for the real Faustus must also commence with these existing documents, for they are all that remain of this enigmatic and sinister individual.

One particular bibliography by Hans Henning presents a list of one hundred and eighty-three references¹ documenting the historical Doctor Faustus; however, many of these documents are considered unreliable due to the obvious assimilation of legendary folklore with historical facts. Therefore, scholars found it necessary, for practical purposes, to limit the number of documents in their research to records that originated during his lifetime and certain events recorded by close contemporaries. This condensed criterion generally commences with documents that first mention Faustus, for instance, Trithemius’ letter dated 1507, branching to various accounts dated after the assumed year of Faustus’ death, (c. 1539 or 1540), extending to 1617 with an excerpt from Fynes Moryson’s *Itinerary*. In 1913, Karl Schottenloher presented an additional document to Faustus scholars for their consideration, an entry from the registration

* **Editorial Policy:** this study is presented in British spelling. Material with braces, { }, indicates editing or comments made by the present author. Material with brackets, [], also marks editing and comments of the present author, with the exception of stage directions in the succeeding Chapters.

¹ Hans Henning, *Faust-Bibliographie* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1966), I, 87–105, in Frank Baron, *Doctor Faustus: From History to Legend* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1978), p. 7.

records of Heidelberg University dated January 9, 1483.² Frank Baron discovered a new Faustus document in 1989.³ Hence, by following a time-line method of categorisation using these same records, we have approximately twenty-nine documents for our particular study. (See Appendix One.)

We may consider twenty-nine sources of information a substantial number to commence with, however, difficulties begin to emerge as we study each respective document. For example, not one, but *two* Faustus figures surface: one who entitled himself “Master Georgius Sabellicus, the younger Faustus”, and a second individual recognised as “Johann Faust” (or Johann Faustus / Faustum). This revelation generated significant confusion: who is the real Faustus? Baron identifies the academic culprit who initiated this anomaly — Johannes Manlius, a student from the University of Wittenberg and a pupil of Martin Luther’s successor, the famous Philipp Melanchthon.⁴ Manlius edited a book entitled *Locurum communium collectanea* (1562), a compilation of anecdotes transcribed from Melanchthon’s lectures; it is here for the first time that we note the name “Johann” associated with Faustus, nearly twenty-five years after the assumed year of his death.⁵ Apparently, Manlius employed artistic licence in his editorial endeavour, for Baron notes that “[...] Manlius did not handle the original material from his teacher very scrupulously; he changed it and added to it to make his presentation more interesting reading.”⁶

Further compounding this confusion, we observe the name “Johannes Faust” in an entry dated 1509 in the matriculation records of Heidelberg University. Therefore, discovering the true identity of this infamous magician becomes complex: was Manlius referring to this individual? Eminent scholars have suggested that possibly two Faustus-figures existed and were simultaneously practising the occult. Will-Erich Peuckert presented a controversial argument suggesting these two men, Gerog and Johann, were father and son — an explanation not generally accepted.⁷

Baron’s response to this Faustian dilemma was to isolate these two individuals and concentrate on George in particular, basing his argument on the observation that the earliest sources record the name “Georg” in both German and Latin accounts, while “Johann”, as mentioned, appeared many years later.⁸ Baron states the earliest sources are perhaps the most reliable due to the fact they were recorded before the phantasmagorical aspects of the legend gained momentum. He also highlighted an important detail, the earliest sources, in Latin *and* German, included the Latin word “Faustus” (meaning ‘fortunate’ or ‘auspicious’), and not the

² Karl Schottenloher, *Münchener neuste Nachrichten*, July 5, 1913 (no. 338), in *Doctor Faustus: From History to Legend*, pp. 17–22. Baron observed this particular document was not previously registered in serious scholarly articles.

³ I wish to thank Prof. Frank Baron for bringing his discovery to my attention. See ‘Faustus his Life and Legend’, (November 12, 2009) *Historicum.net*: http://www.historicum.net/themen/hexenforschung/lexikon/personen/art/Georg_Faustus/html/artikel/7114/ca/693f7c07ad/. See also Frank Baron, ‘Who was the Historical Faustus? Interpreting an Overlooked Source’, *Daphnis* 18, (1989), S. 297–302.

⁴ *Doctor Faustus, from History to Legend*, p. 12.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Will-Erich Peuckert, ‘Dr. Johannes Faust,’ *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 70 (1947), pp. 55–74, in *Doctor Faustus, from History to Legend*, p. 11.

⁸ See *Doctor Faustus, from History to Legend*.

German word “Faust” (translated ‘fist’); a distinction people of the sixteenth century would be cognizant, yet is not generally recognised in this era, particularly when the works of Lessing and Goethe blurred this nomenclature.⁹ Baron states that earlier research incorporating the Heidelberg entry “Johann Faust ex Simern” is a direct result of this erroneous assumption that the Latin appellation was synonymous with the German word “Faust”, hence he elected not to include this entry in his argument.¹⁰

For his study, Baron concentrated on the following nine¹¹ documents:

January 9, 1483:	<u>Heidelberg University:</u> “Georgius Helmstetter”
August 20, 1507:	<u>Johannes Trithemius:</u> “Magister Georgius Sabellicus Faustus iunior”
October 3, 1513:	<u>Conrad Mutianus Rufus:</u> “Georgius Faustus Helmitheus Hedelbergensis”
February 12, 1520:	<u>Hans Müller:</u> “Doctor Faustus philosoph(us)”
June 17, 1528:	<u>An Ingolstadt scribe:</u> “Doctor Jörg Faustus von Haidlberg”
July, 1528:	<u>Kilian Leib:</u> “Georgius Faustus Helmstet(ensis)”
May 10, 1532:	<u>Hieronymus Holzschuher (Junior Burgomaster of Nuremberg):</u> “Doctor Fausto” (i.e. Doctor Faust[us])
August 13, 1536:	<u>Joachim Camerarius:</u> “Faustus”
January 15, 1540:	<u>Philipp von Hutten:</u> “Philosophus Faustus”

These nine sources of information are of particular importance: they either record the name “George” and / or “Faustus”, disclose his place of origin, and reveal the social circles he was affiliated with. A number of these authors became acquainted or associated through their scholastic studies in humanism and the occult. Baron therefore declared, “On the basis of these sources it is possible to make reliable generalizations about the name, birthplace, and studies of Faustus.”¹² As mentioned, Baron discovered an additional manuscript describing how a certain ‘Magister Georgius Helmstette[r]’ drafted a horoscope in 1490 for a student named Peter Seuter,

⁹ Ibid. p. 13.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 12.

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 13, 17.

¹² Ibid. p. 13.

(also spelled Switter), in Heidelberg. For our study of the historical Faustus, we will focus initially on these ten documents.¹³

Baron notes from the onset of the magician's career, Faustus was reluctant to disclose his family name. If "Faustus" was indeed his name, its Latin origin implies it was an assumed identity as humanists adopted the custom of creating pseudonyms by modifying their appellations upon Latin names or Latin phonetics.¹⁴ For an academic occupied in the practise of divination, this Latinised name, 'Faustus', would be advantageous as a method of self-promotion. Supporting this theory is the fact that George also used the name "Sabellicus" according to one of the earliest sources. Baron emphasises the name "Sabellicus" is not German in origin but Latin, and therefore this indicates Faustus designed an affiliation with the land of the Sabines, a region north of Rome that from ancient times became infamously associated with occult practises. By adopting the title "Sabellicus", Faustus claimed an ancestral lineage descending from magicians of antiquity, an appropriate name "[...] for one who claimed to be a *magus*," as Baron observes.¹⁵

An additional and equally questionable title Faustus assumed was "junior", or "the younger Faustus" depending on the translation of the source. As "Faustus" is evidently not his true family name, George deliberately intended contemporaries to associate him with some personage in particular. It is possible George desired a connection with the famous humanist, Pomponius Laetus (d. 1508), who first promoted the ideal that humanists should adopt Latin names. This desired affiliation may also have extended to the students of Laetus: Marcus Antonius Sabellicus (d. 1506) and Publius Faustus Andrelinus (d. 1518).¹⁶ Marcus Antonius Sabellicus, a famous contemporary Italian historian and poet, adopted the name "Sabellicus" as he was born in the Sabine region. Faustus Andrelinus, a professor of rhetoric in Paris, lectured on astronomy with emphasis on astrology. Baron supports Gustav Schwetschke's thesis that George Faustus was therefore directly or indirectly influenced by the new humanist practise of adopting names, and perhaps "Faustus junior" was inspired by Faustus Andrelinus.¹⁷

While Faustus may be reluctant to disclose his family name, he was obviously proud to proclaim his place of origin. Early sources list two separate locations, Helmstadt and Heidelberg, however Baron notes there is no contradiction — both are in the same geographical area, and for the sake of convenience, Faustus on occasion may have simply referred to the larger town, Heidelberg, as his birthplace.¹⁸ Baron observes this practise of generalisation was common for the sake of clarity, when people would not be familiar with smaller geographical townships. In addition, Mutianus Rufus' letter (1513) featuring Faustus' curious title of "Helmitheus Hedelbergensis" may in fact be misspellings for "Helmstadius / Helmstetius" and "Heidlebergensis". Baron therefore concludes, "[...] the primary sources indicate clearly that the place where the historical Faustus was born was not Kundling or Knittlingen, as it was asserted in later sources, but rather Helmstadt near Heidelberg."¹⁹

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¹³ 'Faustus his Life and Legend'.

¹⁴ *Doctor Faustus, from History to Legend*, p.14.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 91.

¹⁷ Gustav Schwetschke, "Wer was Faustus senior? Ein Beitrag zur Faustgeschichte," *Deutsches Museum*, Oct. 11, 1855, pp. 548–551, in *Doctor Faustus, from History to Legend*, pp. 32–33, 91.

¹⁸ *Doctor Faustus, from History to Legend*, p. 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2

The Dawn of Faustian Literature

Subsequent to Faustus' death, the evolution of his story from biographical fact and oral legend to polished literary genres was a gradual process. With the exception of a few publications featuring passing references to the magician until the year 1587, the first Faustian literature in Germany generally circulated as unsophisticated compilations of folklore in manuscript form. The earliest of these collections may be the *Reichmann-Wambach Chronical* of the mid-sixteenth century, unfortunately, this record survives through a secondary source, therefore Christoph Rosshirt's *Chronicle* (c. 1570–1575) examined in Chapter One is generally recognised by scholars as the first official attempt in assembling the popular Faust tales.²⁰ Of greater importance, the emergence of the Faust legend as a structurally unified work centres on the Wolfenbüttel Manuscript (c.1580–1587*), the earliest extant example of the handwritten texts that prefigured and set the foundation in both content and pseudo-biographical style for the original printed Spies *Faustbook* of 1587.

The Wolfenbüttel Manuscript

In view of the rapid dissemination of humanist ideology heralded by the revolutionary Gutenberg press (c. 1450), the considerable delay of the first publication of the *Faustbooks* (Spies 1587), circa one-hundred and thirty seven years following the debut of this momentous invention, is perplexing. However, H. G. Haile presents one reasonable possibility for this time-lapse in his new 1965 edition of the Wolfenbüttel Manuscript when recalling:

“Four centuries back, you would have read the Faust Book on folio parchment, handwritten by a professional scribe. [...] Your Faust Book was not in print because the people regarded it as a horrible, blasphemous account which endangered the soul of its reader.”²¹

According to the preface of the Wolfenbüttel text, an ‘official’ Latin compilation of Faust’s ‘biographical’ adventures was already in existence and circulated privately within certain privileged circles. It was the opinion of the translator that the Latin version was not written nor printed in German prior to that time due to certain apprehensions, namely that the uneducated

²⁰ Palmer and More, *Sources of the Faust Tradition*, p. 129.

* The date of the Wolfenbüttel MS was previously thought to be c. 1572–1587, however, recent research indicates the date could be within the 1580s, i.e. (1580–1587). See ‘n. &’ below at ‘The Faustian Texts and the Printing Press: The First Printed *Faustbook* (1587)’.

²¹ Haile, *History of Doctor Johann Faustus*, p. 16.

would be inclined to follow the reprobate's example and summon demons to their utter destruction:

“My very dear friend and brother, this translation of Doctor Faustus and his wicked design is the result of your repeated request that I should put the Latin into German, which, so far as I am aware, has not been done. The reason it has not been printed or written in German is clear: so that no wicked and uneducated persons will use it as a model on which to build their fantasies and attempt to do as he did. [...] I could not forbear from adding this preamble and the anecdotes within the work itself, both as an apology and a caution. I am quite confident that you will find the deeds of Doctor Faustus a pleasant diversion, especially since these events are true and consequently you will enjoy them more than other, fictitious stories. Dear friend and brother, take it and read it to enliven your garden walk.”²²

Today, we who are accustomed to the graphic nature of modern horror films, may be amused at the intensity of the discretion with which the seemingly unrefined Faustian manuscripts were regarded. Similar to the earlier Faust anthologies, the Wolfenbüttel text features a diverse collection of popular Faust myths with legends initially attributed to other magicians, thus precipitating the comment from Palmer and More: “It is a crude piece of compilation of no literary value.”²³ In that religiously conscious era, however, when the concept of a distinct separation between Church and State was unheard of, the welfare of the immortal soul was of paramount importance in the clerical and secular spheres collectively. Similar to scholars trained in the hermetic tradition who preferred not to divulge their interest in the occult fearing reprisals, enterprising publishers refrained from printing a definitive book of Faustus or Faustian folklore, discouraged by the possible threat of punishment from the authorities for seducing gullible readers with tales purportedly glorifying an evil individual. The Renaissance era, a time of insatiable scientific enquiry and exploration, was nevertheless restrained by the spiritual prudence of the Medieval age.

Unfortunately, the original Latin manuscript was lost; however, its extant successor, the Wolfenbüttel text, displays the first attempts to inscribe a serious literary representation of Faustus for study within private academic circles, a development that ultimately prepared the legend for general publication in future years. We may presume it was the author of the Latin text who ingeniously discovered a licit method of recording these myths, rather than simply gather a ‘perilous’ collection of Faustian folklore, he refashioned the history of Faustus by creating a fictitious biography of a noted Epicurean to serve as an admonition to those of discernment. Evidently, the translator of the Wolfenbüttel text recognised the efficacy of this idea and embellished the text with his personal admonishing “anecdotes” as mentioned in his preface. In the Introduction of the Wolfenbüttel text it is announced:

The sorcerer, wherein is described specifically and veraciously:

²² Empson, Henry Jones (ed.), *Faustus and the Censor*, pp. 31–32.

²³ *Sources of the Faust Tradition*, p. 129.

His entire life and death,
How he did oblige himself for a certain time unto the Devil,
And what happened to him,
And how he at last got his well-deserved reward.

Rare revelations are also included, for these examples are most useful and efficacious as a highly essential Christian warning and admonition, that the laity, in order to protect themselves from similar maculations of the most shameful sort, have especial cause to heed and to avoid such a desperate fate.²⁴

Contemporary readers already familiar with the profusion of semi-credible Faustian myths through oral tradition, obviously did not challenge what appeared in ink and parchment, it would be inconceivable that a text intended for moral edification would have an element of falsehood contained within! The author of the original Latin text, probably aware that this work would be credibly received, used this knowledge to his utmost advantage when transcribing his version — the translator of the Wolfenbüttel manuscript, in the transcription intended for his friend, also declared the veracity of the ‘biographical’ information, notwithstanding his own additions. Faustus was thereby transformed into *the* emblematic antithesis to Protestant morality for those who supported the new theology of the Reformation.

Certainly, the Wolfenbüttel text may indeed be perceived as a primitive, “crude compilation” of famous Faust* tales upon first inspection; however, we observe that the majority of these popular myths were not introduced immediately in the narration and were deliberately reserved for the latter sections. In fact, the first half of the manuscript features distinctive, carefully constructed material pertaining to Faust’s experiences with the demons of Hell that are not included in surviving documents or works of fiction dating from the era the text was compiled. Obviously, it was not the author’s objective[§] to produce a mere anthology — his primary concern was to fashion an original and structured, coherent rendition of the legend in an effort to present an academic text for moral edification and philosophical interest, albeit for a select readership and not for the general public.²⁵

²⁴ *History of Doctor Johann Faustus*, p. 17

* As the Wolfenbüttel manuscript features the various forms and spellings of Faustus’ name, e.g. Faustus, Fauste, Faust, for our discussion of the text the names “Faust” and “Faustus” are used respectively in this Chapter to distinguish between the legendary character of literature and the historical figure, with the exception of direct quotations.

§ There is a certain difficulty in discussing the *author’s* intentions as the original Latin MS upon which the Wolfenbüttel text was based is now lost. We must also acknowledge this Latin text may be previously embellished by other scribes. Additionally, the “author” of the Wolfenbüttel text is actually the *translator* of this lost MS, but he also added to the material. For the remainder of our analysis of the Wolfenbüttel text, we have used the term “author” to reflect what appears to be the original material retained from the lost text, and consider the ‘translator’ one of the scribes. (Hence, the use of the term “Wolfenbüttel” in our study also takes into account the lost Latin document.)

²⁵ The text we used for our analysis of the Wolfenbüttel manuscript is from H. G. Haile’s translation in *The History of Doctor Johann Faustus* (University of Illinois Press, 1965). Haile reorganised the layout of the text, and deleted several chapters due to repetitions that occurred when scribes began to add their own folklore to the MS, and claims this version “[...] is probably just as close as we shall

The work is divided into four** sections: the first pertains to Faust's university education in the field of theology and his seduction by the black arts leading to the twenty-four year contract for his soul. The second part in general narrates his exploits in the realm of astronomy and astrology, while the third section displays his digression into pandering to the great princes and potentates of the day with his magic powers. Finally, in the fourth section, Faust continues to assist and entertain his associates and students with his skills and indulges in a variety of vices. When his last day on earth draws to a close, he laments his horrid fate, bids farewell to his acquaintances, and is torn limb from limb by demons when the appointed hour of his death befalls him. Notably, this four-part structure of the text parallels one of Luther's deductions regarding the devil's subtle plan to attack the faith of Christians. Oberman relates:

“The Devil himself appears on the scene and will not content himself with simple ‘temptations,’ as Luther termed the seducer’s arts. The Devil drives a person to doubt his election, and seduces the doubter into wanting to penetrate God’s hidden will to find out whether or not he is really among those chosen by God. This undertaking must fail and the ensuing uncertainty leads to fear, blasphemy, and hatred for God, and finally to doubts about the existence of God altogether. What the Devil would most like to do is to push all Christians to the brink of revelation, tempt them to try to penetrate God’s nature, and then let them fall where he fell himself: into the void.”²⁶

In the Wolfenbüttel Text, Faust rejects his university education in the field of theology, and embraces occult mysticism to which he devotes all his energies, attempting to penetrate the mystery of creation by demonic intervention and trusting in their sundry ‘revelations’. Yet in the second half of the text, when the devil has succeeded in numbing Faust’s conscience to God’s justice and replaces it with despair marring his hope to receive Divine mercy, Faust grows indifferent to the philosophical and scientific realm altogether, abandoning himself to all manner of iniquity in a life of habitual sin. Finally, his spiritual paralysis is complete as he relinquishes all hope of salvation — compelled to submit to his fate, he plummets into the Abyss.

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ever get to how the Faust Book [i.e. the manuscript] looked when it was first written.” (Haile, p. 16) It is clear he intended to present a text that is an approximate *of the original Latin edition*. Unfortunately, this poses two difficulties: the edition as an example of the Latin original is merely speculative, and second, this edited version impairs a detailed study of the actual Wolfenbüttel MS. Hence, any discovered omissions from the Wolfenbüttel MS or other editing by Haile will be indicated in the course of our study. For the original German reprint of the Wolfenbüttel MS, see Gustav Milchsack, *Historia D. Johannis Fausti des Zauberers nach der Wolfenbütteler Handschrift* (Wolfenbüttel, 1892).

* * That is, in Haile’s edited edition. John Henry Jones relates the Wolfenbüttel MS is very close to the first printed book by Spies, which actually has three sections with the last subdivided into two parts. *Faustus and the Censor*, p. 30.

²⁶ Oberman, *Luther, Man Between God and the Devil*, p. 179.

Chapter 3

Christopher Marlowe and Faustus: “That Which Nourishes Me Destroys Me”

Fate, now preparing the way for the dramatisation of the Faustian legend, delivered the text into the hands of a determined young man equal to this task. The ink hardly dried on the first English translation of the Spies *Faustbook* when the tragic tale of this ambitious scholar-magician ensnared the unfathomable imagination of Christopher Marlowe. This Cambridge graduate had astounded London playgoers with his dramatic representations of Tamburlaine the conqueror, and eagerly searched for a unique subject for his next endeavour. Under Marlowe's poetic plume, the book-bound figure of Faust, caged within the homiletic framework of the early literature, became dynamically reinvigorated, his character redefined with three-dimensional intensity. This achievement is comprehensible when we consider the libertine lifestyle of the playwright bears an arresting resemblance to the historical Faustus.

A scholar of Divinity, Marlowe rejected the ecclesiastical expectations of his scholarship that stipulated he enter the Protestant ministry, and alternatively chose the exciting and morally objectionable career of the theatre. He covertly worked as a spy for the government in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I during his university years and therefore was easily enticed into the perilous cloak-and-dagger world of court espionage, counterfeiting and assassination plots. A quarrelsome young man by nature, he faced several criminal charges for duelling and disturbing the peace. On one occasion pending a court decision, he was incarcerated in the infamous Newgate prison as a murder suspect, but was released on bail, and eventually cleared of all wrongdoing. In the latter years of his brief life, Marlowe's contemporaries revealed he was a confirmed atheist who adamantly rejected the Scriptures and organised religion in general as the work of ambitious men, beginning with Moses and Christ, whom he believed endeavoured to control the masses with superstitious devotion and artful illusions. It was rumoured Marlowe drafted an academic tract on the subject and presented it at a private lecture attended by the Earl of Northumberland and his close circle of academic associates that included Sir Walter Raleigh. It was presumed, Marlowe wished to win many new proselytes to his Epicurean dogmas of religious scepticism. Contemporaries also 'disclosed' Marlowe's scandalous appreciation of pederasty with the allegation he declared: "That all they that love not Tobacco & Boies were fooles."²⁷ One night in Deptford, at the age of twenty-nine, Marlowe unexpectedly encountered the Grim Reaper when he was stabbed through the right eye during what was originally believed to be a skirmish over the reckoning of a dinner bill: a gruesome end interpreted by the religious-minded of his day as a omen revealing that a confirmed son of perdition had received Divine retribution. Re-examining the circumstances surrounding his death, modern scholars uncovered what may be considered a government assassination plot to silence their former agent. Due to his unorthodox religious opinions, his loyalty to the Queen as the head of the Church in England and to the State was viewed with suspicion and held in question.

Marlowe, no doubt, recognised in the character of Faustus his personal cynicism in regard

²⁷ I.e. in the "Baines Note" (May 1593); see Appendix Seven.

to the subject of religion and his ardent desire to accomplish great deeds in the world. As a result, he injected new life-blood into the Faustian tale using the syringe of his worldly experiences and education, his hopes, fears and ambitions. To understand and appreciate his representation of Faustus, we therefore in our study must also explore this tragic play against the backdrop of the playwright's biography. Marlowe was a product of his culture and times, and consequently so too were the personal creations that blossomed from his philosophy and imagination — his poetry, and in particular, his dramas.

Childhood Days and Education

Christopher Marlowe was born in the famous pilgrimage town of Canterbury in 1564 and was baptised on February 26, two months before his future rival, William Shakespeare (1564–1616), received the same sacrament in Stratford-upon-Avon. Christopher was the second child and the first son born to John and Katherine Marlowe. The couple were blessed with nine children in total, four boys and five girls although extant historical documentation and other sources indicate that at least three of their children did not survive into adulthood.

Christopher's parents hailed from the menial labouring class. In his early twenties, John Marlowe migrated from Ospring to Canterbury during the mid-1550s in search of work. During 1559 and 1560, he was apprenticed to a member of the local shoemakers guild and eventually moved to the parish of St. George the Martyr. One year had hardly elapsed in his apprenticeship when he married Katherine, a recent migrant from the city of Dover. The newly-weds did not live in a very pleasant area of the city as David Riggs illustrates:

“This foul-smelling district [of St. George the Martyr parish] lay between the cattle market outside St. George's gate and the slaughterhouse within the city walls; it was an apt neighbourhood for the aspirant leatherworker. Carts bearing tubs of blood and offal trundled along St. George's Street. The town gallows stood just beyond the cattle market, on Oaten Hill, from 1575 onwards. [...] The bellows of cattle being driven to the butcher's shambles and the pervasive odour of blood were among [Christopher's] earliest sensations. In adolescence, he grew accustomed to the sight of condemned men being carted past his home to the gallows [...].”²⁸

John Marlowe's fortunes unexpectedly took a turn for the better when his master died of the bubonic plague a few weeks after Christopher was born. St. George's parish had already experienced a shortage of artisans following an influenza epidemic that ravaged the city during the late 1550s, and thus having completed only four years of his apprenticeship, John Marlowe joined the Shoemakers' Guild (April 20, 1564) without completing the statutory seven years.²⁹ Membership to the guild opened up new opportunities and social liberties for his family and to

²⁸ David Riggs, *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Henry Holt and Co. LLC, 2005), pp. 12, 14.

²⁹ Ibid. 17.

some extent, raised their social standing within the community. Riggs writes:

“As a freeman, John gained the right to open his own shop, sell his wares and enrol apprentices. He could now ‘speak and be heard’ at town meetings. He was entitled to sue for debt in the Borough Court. When his two-month-old son Christopher grew up, he could join his father’s guild upon the payment of a nominal fee. The sons-in-law of freemen also enjoyed automatic access to this small group of privileged tradesmen. John Marlowe’s daughter had gained a dowry. [...] He] had secured a narrow foothold at the lower end of the ‘middling classes’ — a category that encompassed everyone who ranked a notch below the gentry, the clergy and the members of the professions, and a cut above day labourers and tenant farmers. Within this middle stratum shoemakers came [...] before only the most menial craftsmen (tillers, thatchers, miners.)”³⁰

John Marlowe acquired additional skills that increased his prospects to further his fortunes — he could read and write. These accomplishments enabled him to find additional work as a freelance law clerk, and in later years, to become a parish clerk. He also found employment in many civil posts, e.g. he served as a sideman and churchwarden, and eventually exchanged his original trade of a shoemaker for that of a victualler before his death.³¹

The infant Christopher, as with all children born in that era, began life in a world of hardships fraught with daily hazards. Children would have to survive multiple diseases and illnesses prevalent in that age, and face a myriad of domestic and external dangers. During the first year, a child would most likely be wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed by the fire for warmth due to the inclement weather of England, placing the child in constant danger as the bedclothes could easily catch fire and required constant vigilance.³² By toddler age, as with Christopher, mothers and older siblings needed to be ever watchful for as Riggs notes, “There was no way to childproof the home of an early modern artisan. [...] there was the ever present danger of playing with fire or his father’s sharp tools.”³³ Notwithstanding the dangers present within the home, the outdoors also presented particular hazards in that era. Marlowe’s street contained an open sewage ditch that posed a constant threat to the health of the general public, or he faced the danger of stray herds of pigs, horses and cattle that roamed freely, in addition to the constant traffic of wagons and horsemen, in particular, wagons loaded with the refuse of the slaughtered animals from the butchers’ shambles.³⁴ Obviously, the early life of Christopher Marlowe was rugged and harsh in the extreme. However, by the time Marlowe reached his tenth year, his family had moved to the parish of St. Andrews, a marginal improvement.³⁵ Possibly, his father hoped to attract customers that were more affluent by choosing an area closer to the city

³⁰ Ibid. pp. 17–18, 19.

³¹ Constance Brown Kuriyama, *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life* (Cornwall University Press: 2002), p. 19.

³² *World of Christopher Marlowe*, p. 21.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ *A Renaissance Life*, p. 18.

centre.

School commenced for children generally at the age of six, and Marlowe's first lessons began in petty school where he was taught to read. However, these initial centres of learning were managed haphazardly in comparison with our modern standards and often lacked competent teachers. Riggs writes, "[...] Tudor elementary schools had no permanent buildings. Schoolmasters held classes wherever space became available; itinerant instructors came and went."³⁶ Marlowe's first teacher was possibly the Reverend William Sweeting, a poor and simpleminded tailor. Rev. Sweeting, and a motley group unqualified for these positions, had hastily received ordination as pastors in 1558 from Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury. This decision was reached in a desperate effort to fill the ecclesiastical vacuum left by the mortal epidemics of influenza and bubonic plague, not to mention the vacancies resulting from the violence and altercations between the Catholic and Protestant factions that had decimated the numbers of the local clergy.³⁷ In point of fact, this shortage of ministers had reached a critical level forcing Church authorities to append the responsibilities of an additional parish to Rev. Sweeting's duties, notwithstanding he could not fulfil the simple task of preaching one sermon a year.³⁸

This is a minor indication of the tremendous religious upheaval the city had experienced. The centre of Roman Catholic worship in England since the arrival of St. Augustine in 597, pilgrims flocked to Canterbury cathedral to visit the famous shrine where St. Thomas à Becket was martyred during his devotions in 1170 by four of King Henry II's men. Of all the pilgrimage sites in Europe, this shrine became the third most important, that is until 1538 when Henry VIII, as the newly appointed head of the Church of England, by royal command ordered this shrine to be dismantled and all its treasure and donations confiscated, his soldiers hauled away twenty-six cartloads of jewels and votive offerings to fill the royal coffers.³⁹ They sacrilegiously burned the relics of St. Thomas à Becket, and scattered his ashes to the four winds. Describing the destruction of other important monuments at that time, Riggs states, "Just outside the city walls, much of St. Augustine's Abbey lay in ruins, another victim of the reformers' iconoclasm and greed."⁴⁰ Protestantism continued during the reign of Henry's son, King Edward VI (b.1537—d.1553), and then radically suppressed with the succession of Catholic Queen Mary I (b.1516—d.1558). During her five-year reign, she earned the title 'Bloody Mary' for her persecution of Protestant supporters, she had approximately three hundred people executed as heretics. Riggs relates the terrible impact her reign inflicted upon the already distressed town:

"[...] Mary I only aggravated the troubles that beset mid-century Canterbury. If [John] Marlowe had arrived by 1556, he could have joined the crowds that gathered at nearby Wincheap to watch forty-three Protestant martyrs burn at the stake. During the reign of 'Bloody' Mary, Canterbury saw more executions for heresy than any place in England, apart from London. John Marlowe came to a city in crisis."⁴¹

³⁶ *World of Christopher Marlowe*, p. 25.

³⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 15, 25.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 15.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 17.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Finally, the kingdom experienced a period of stability during the reign of Elizabeth I (b.1533—1603) who re-established a moderate form of Protestantism, although the constant fear of a Catholic insurrection and civil war continued to linger. These cataclysmic changes from one regime to another wrenched the heart of the kingdom and shredded the fabric of society in England:

“[...] Canterbury felt the full shock of these seismic alterations. Each time a new king [or queen] came to the throne, everyone in the ecclesiastical establishment had to adapt or be deprived. These vacillations left parish life badly demoralized. When the Crown lawyer and antiquarian William Lambarde visited Canterbury during the 1560s, the city was a shadow of its former self: ‘And therefore no marvel,’ he reckoned, ‘if wealth withdrawn, and opinion of holiness removed, the places tumble headlong to ruin and decay.’⁴²” (Riggs.)⁴³

These religious broils fomented constant disruptions in local politics with factions supporting Catholic or Protestant creeds rising and falling according to each new succession to the throne. Hence migrants, as with Marlowe’s family, who endeavoured to survive this period of civil strife had one safe option: drift with the tide and remain as ‘invisible’ and as neutral as possible, supporting those who currently held offices of power at any given time. John Marlowe prudently followed this policy:

“John Marlowe kept a prudent distance from the ideological struggles that set long-time residents in ruinous conflict with one another.

The father’s wary detachment gives the first inkling of his son’s ironic, uncommitted stance on questions of religious belief. Children discover their identities through exchanges with the world around them. [...] Christopher Marlowe, the son of immigrants situated on the margins of their community, spent most of his life in a place where elementary structures of religious belief were constantly being discredited.” (Riggs)⁴⁴

Returning to Christopher’s initial school experiences, this early identity and character-shaping phase of his life started with a literacy-based indoctrination programme first established by Henry VIII. The king devised this basic course to instil a sense of duty in the new religious order of the realm rather than provide a service to develop practical skills.⁴⁵

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⁴² Rigg’s n.: ‘William Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent* (London, 1576), p. 236.’

⁴³ Riggs, ‘Marlowe’s Life’, in Patrick Cheney, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 26.

⁴⁴ *World of Christopher Marlowe*, p. 16.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 25. 28.

Chapter 4

The Transition Years

The popularity of the Faustian legend remained constant, particularly as the *Faustbooks* and their variants continued to be published in Europe. However, during the subsequent two hundred years, the story gradually regressed from what was once a serious subject of drama and literature into semi-farcical entertainments, and eventually demoted to the domain of the puppet theatres. While this period is generally recognised as the nadir in the Faust Tradition, it was also a time of metamorphic dormition awaiting a new generation of inspired authors and dramatists to rediscover the literary potential of the legend and fan new flames from cinders hidden beneath the ashes of familiarity.



The next phase in the *Faustbook* phenomenon following the publication of Spies' edition commenced when George Rudolf Widman's "Authentic Life" of Faustus was published in Hamburg (1599).⁴⁶ It was yet in the writing process during 1587 before Spies' work was printed, although Henry Jones notes Widman may have consulted a manuscript on which Spies' *Historia* was based.⁴⁷ Widman claimed to have included material collected from the university students and the account 'written' by 'Johannes Wäiger', (i.e. Wagner). In the process of compiling this work, Widman completely reinvented the character of Mephostophiles as a benevolent Middle Spirit who unfortunately is enslaved by Satan.⁴⁸ Faustus is portrayed as a Lutheran who according to Rose is "[...] a young man led astray by the Church of Rome."⁴⁹ This book may have proved to be a literary favourite were it not for its daunting length and proselytising, anti-papal tone. Palmer and More describe the text as "[...] an intolerably long-winded account of Faust's career interspersed with dreary moralizing comments. [...It] was apparently not reprinted until modern times."⁵⁰

Due to various political and cultural upheavals, the vogue for printing *Faustbooks* in Germany declined rapidly during the next seventy-five years. The ravages of the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), a conflict that erupted from the religio-political tensions of the Protestant Reformation, appears to be a major factor in the hiatus of *Faustbook* productions.⁵¹ When the Peace of Westphalia was finally signed on October 24, 1648, the Holy Roman Empire under the dominion of the Hapsburgs was severely weakened as the Netherlands and Switzerland were recognised as independent states, while other territories and bishoprics were politically

⁴⁶ Palmer and More, *Sources of the Faust Tradition*, p. 131.

⁴⁷ Henry Jones, *English Faustbook; A Critical Ed.*, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Rose, *Damnable Life and Deserved Death of [...] Faustus*, p. 40.

⁵⁰ *Sources of the Faust Tradition*, p. 130.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 131.

reorganised or ceded to France and Sweden, thus the Kingdom of France became the leading power on the Continent. This War seriously impeded the political unification of Germany, and reduced the population considerably from twenty to fifty percent in certain localities while many of the survivors were displaced refugees; the economy was in deep recession, and morale was at one of its lowest points. The first 'English Comedians' arrived on the Continent in the closing decades of the sixteenth century, i.e. travelling companies of English actors, who introduced the art of English stagecraft and the earliest English dramatic masterpieces to Germany. Shortly thereafter, dramas were on the increase, presumably as the populace sought for alternative diversions that provided an escape from the horrors of the war that surrounded them, and later from the aftermath of the conflicts that completely demoralised the various states and principalities of Germany. Faust dramas became a regular favourite, which temporarily eclipsed the popularity of the *Faustbooks*. Palmer and More also note that the general population was gradually liberated from the fevered grip of the witch-hunting frenzy experienced in earlier centuries that once heightened the intrigue associated with the occult nature of the Faust legend and contributed towards the dissemination of the *Faustbook*.⁵² Witchcraft was now scrutinised under the growing spirit of rationalism heralding the Age of Enlightenment, and the systematic slaughter of alleged wizards and witches in Europe was gradually becoming a horror of the past: Salem in colonial Massachusetts would mark the end-times of the major witch hunts in 1692.*

When the English acting troupes first toured Germany, they presented their repertoire of plays in the English language while only the comic sections were translated into German.⁵³ Later, they translated entire English plays into German, although the integrity of the texts was severely mutilated in the process before original German works were eventually produced on stage.⁵⁴ German actors soon joined the visiting troupes, and eventually, established native acting companies.⁵⁵

While an argument was presented that an early German Faust play possibly existed in the sixteenth century,⁵⁶ there is no authenticated proof, and therefore Marlowe's drama is generally recognised as the earliest surviving dramatic representation of the legend. Consequently, scholars believe an adaptation of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is the first recognised Faust play produced on the Continent in Graz (1608), considering that the acting company was English and possibly familiar with Marlowe's magnum opus.⁵⁷ Bearing in mind the nature of these English performances with only the buffoonery translated into German, Marlowe's poetic gems and his philosophical expression were unfortunately lost on this new public as the troupes concentrated upon the scenic effects and comic elements to compensate for the half-translated dialogue.

⁵² Ibid.

* Nevertheless, witch executions continued for a number of years in Europe. The last execution in Germany, for example, occurred in 1782. (David Luke, in *Oxford World's Classics—Goethe. Faust: Part One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), n. 93, p. 168.

⁵³ *Sources of the Faust Tradition*, p. 240.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 239. Walz's article 'A German Faust Play of the Sixteenth Century,' *Germanic Review*, III (1928) is recommended by Palmer and More for further reading on the subject.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 240.

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